

Corridor Working Group Meeting – Meeting Summary

September 19, 2006

1:30 – 3:30

WSDOT Kent Maintenance Center
26620 68th Avenue South, Kent 98032

Attendees:

WSDOT

Susan Everett
Carol Hunter
Ed Barry
Mike Sallis
Elizabeth Stratton

City of Auburn

Roger Thordarson

City of Kent

Tim LaPorte

City of Renton

Keith Woolley

City of Sumner

Bill Shoemaker

King County

Paul Takamine

Pierce County

Cindy Bui

PSRC

Mike Cummings

Envirolssues

Linda Mullen
Amy Turner

Perteet

Michael Booth
Tresia Bass
Jeff Lundstrom

Welcome and Introductions

Carol Hunter, WSDOT

Carol Hunter, WSDOT, welcomed the group and thanked them for coming.

Approve June 20th Meeting Summary

Carol Hunter, WSDOT

Copies of the August 15th meeting summary were sent to the partners via email before the meeting and a hard copy was provided at the meeting. Carol asked for comments on the summary and approved the summary without additional comment.

HOT Lanes Status Report

Jeff Lundstrom, Perteet

The team is closing in on final project design and has found they won't have significant wetland impacts. The project will be advertised in spring 2007 with instructions to have the tolling tested, active and lanes open to traffic in April 2008.

The RFP is still out for the tolling vendor. The last addendum was submitted on Friday, Sept. 15 and the final proposals are due in two weeks. There will be a WSDOT scoring and selection process and a contractor will be selected in late October.

Discussion

- Tim LaPorte, City of Kent, asked if the HOT lanes would open in April 2008 using existing HOT lanes and whether the Stage 4 HOV lanes would also be part of the HOT lanes system. The Stage 4 HOV lanes will open in 2010 and will likely be part of the HOT lanes system.
- Keith Woolley, City of Renton, asked when Stage 3 will be completed. Carol said the project is about one year early, but will come back to the group with the actual date. Carol will also provide the schedule to Keith Woolley because employers in Renton have been questioning the construction staging schedule. She suggested looking at the project Web page: http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR167/HOV15thSW_15thNW/
- Mike Cummings, PSRC, asked if the HOT lanes will have a soft launch in April 2008. Jeff Lundstrom explained the lanes will be tested for six weeks prior to opening. The project is using the same equipment and transponders as the Tacoma Narrows Bridge which is opening prior to the HOT lanes. The TNB project will help work out any hiccups in the system. Linda Mullen, EnviroIssues, added that public involvement and education plans are being drafted right now and TransCore will handle marketing and sales.
- Carol Hunter explained there are extenuating circumstances that prevent an early opening of the HOT lanes. April is a better month because of daylight and weather. The striping and signs have to be visible to drivers. The State also wants to avoid opening the facility at the same time as the Tacoma Narrows Bridge because it may be confusing to drivers.
- FHWA awarded \$930,000 to test public outreach and the concept of value pricing. Elizabeth Stratton, WSDOT, asked if value pricing will include freight or a truck only lane. Carol Hunter suggested Elizabeth talk to David Forte.

Stage 4 HOV Project

Ed Barry, WSDOT

Ed Barry provided an update on the Stage 4 HOV project. The team is working with Perteet's environmental group. They have completed preliminary geotechnical work and are looking at the SR 18 interchange.

The team is working to get an updated right of way alignment for the project. The biggest concern is the stormwater flow control and water quality strategies. Meetings have been scheduled with the City of Auburn to discuss both conventional and unconventional strategies. The stormwater issues are the biggest challenges for the Environmental Document.

Carol Hunter added that both stormwater and wetland issues affect the Stage 4 project, and also the whole corridor. At the next meeting, the partners will discuss stormwater strategies. The entire valley used to be a fjord and the water table is high. Stage 3 is going to build an anchored down vault which doesn't make sense for Stage 4 so the project team has to think differently.

Discussion

- Tim LaPorte asked if Stage 4 faces different requirements than Stage 3. Ed Barry explained that Stage 4 must meet new published geotechnical standards. This may be an issue on the southbound bridge. Carol Hunter explained the soil is unstable along the SR 167 corridor which is an issue because there are 30 bridges. Widening bridges is not always possible which may lead to retrofitting bridges instead. This process can be very expensive. Preliminary analyses have started in the south end and will move to the north end of the corridor next year.
- Ed Barry explained the bridges down to 24th Street E can accommodate additional lanes, but SR 18 needs to be studied further.

Preliminary Results of Transportation Modeling

Tresia Bass, Perteet

Copies of the PowerPoint presentation were provided to each of the attendees.

Tresia Bass reviewed the 2010 and 2020 bottleneck projects which include Stage 3, 4, 5 and the HOT lanes. In 2010, there are some small time savings – a minute in the general purpose lanes and a few minutes in the HOT lanes. With 2020 projects, drivers would save 2 to 3 minutes in the HOT lanes.

The 2030 long term options included eight and 10 lane options:

- Option 2: Three general purpose lanes with one HOV/HOT lane and an auxiliary lane in some sections.
- Option 2a: Two general purpose lanes with two HOV/HOT lanes and an auxiliary lane in some sections.
- Option 4: A 10 lane option with three general purpose lanes and two HOV/HOT lanes.
- Option 4a: For the 10 lane section north of SR 18, there would be three general purpose lanes and two HOV/HOT lanes. In the eight lane section south of SR 18, there would be two general purpose lanes and two HOV/HOT lanes.

With each of the four options, the corridor travel time ranges from the existing condition of 39 minutes up to one and a half hours at speeds of 14-16 miles per hour in the general purpose lanes. The HOT lane travel time is less than a half hour because speeds of 45 mph would be maintained. The models also show better use of the HOT lanes.

According to the models, the growth will fill the additional lanes being built.

Discussion

- Tim LaPorte commented that people commuting from Orting, Sumner and Buckley will drive on city streets because of SR 167 congestion. Tresia Bass responded that arterials close to the freeway will still have traffic as

SR 167 Corridor Plan, Environmental Assessment, and HOT Lanes Pilot Project

people try to get on the freeway, but arterials a mile or more away from the freeway will see a decrease in traffic.

- Susan Everett, WSDOT, asked about maximum capacity for the HOT lanes. Tresia explained the lanes are three quarters full with HOV and transit. The rest are cars with transponders.
- There was general discussion about how drivers may be irritated when the HOT lanes fill up and close to only transit and carpoolers.
- Mike Cummings, PSRC, asked if the weaves and merges associated with 16 interchanges are being tested. Some national modeling about weaves and merges show lower throughput because of the direct access to interchanges and the difference between an HOV lane versus a HOT lane. WSDOT is currently doing direct access analysis.
- Tim LaPorte said cities have supported option 4 because local arterials are falling apart by people avoiding SR 167. There were painful RTID prioritization meetings in the past where cities chose to put money toward highway improvements. Tim would like to show the City Council some of this modeling.
- Susan Everett informed the partners that there are hard choices facing this group. The projects will have to be prioritized and phased because currently, there is only \$420 million in RTID for SR 167 and the group needs to determine a realistic investment and corridor vision.
- Elizabeth Stratton suggested adding a column to the grid that shows the number of cars carried which demonstrates the number of cars that would have to be carried on other roads or local arterials.
- Bill Shoemaker, City of Sumner, asked if there are any plans for an entirely new freeway or other projects such as the Cross Base Highway. Carol Hunter responded that WSDOT has looked at a different corridor but there are many environmental issues and trucks need to be near I-5 for Port access. Elizabeth Stratton reminded everyone that truck peak periods (8 a.m. to 1 p.m.) are different than commuter traffic.
- Tim LaPorte asked Carol Hunter to explain her TOT lane research. Carol found that the threshold for facilities with four lanes each way is daily truck volumes of 20,000 trucks per day. SR 167 doesn't meet this threshold. Elizabeth Stratton said the trucking industry supports paying a toll if there is a cost savings by the reduction in travel time. This may fit in with congestion pricing outreach.
- Bill Shoemaker asked if the Union Pacific main line could be used to build a three lane road for trucks. Tim LaPorte said the national precedence for condemning a railroad is poor and the railroad isn't interested in abandoning the facility. Elizabeth Stratton said the rail system is reaching capacity and you wouldn't want to divert this back to truck traffic.
- Tim LaPorte asked for brochures or additional information to provide to City Council. He said local residents need to understand the message that they have to pay for improvements and may have the opportunity to approve more funding. He is willing to use local cable access and utility bill inserts to talk about SR 167 projects.

SR 167 Corridor Plan, Environmental Assessment, and HOT Lanes Pilot Project

- Linda Mullen described a recent WSDOT survey of Snohomish, King and Pierce counties that discussed RTID projects and funding. It shows positive support for funding mechanisms. The issues of transportation and traffic were also ranked markedly higher than other issues facing the Puget Sound region. This survey is available at www.wsdot.wa.gov under accountability.

Carol Hunter asked municipalities to submit any questions. The group will meet for the next two to three months to wrap up. Contact Carol if anyone wants to schedule local briefings with councils.

Carol asked for local municipalities for questions.

Adjourn

Next Meeting: 10/17/06

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